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Safer Anal sex

A guide to making anal sex safer!





A note about anal play

Anal play isn't just about penis penetration. Anal sex can describe any sexual activity that involves the anus. This includes inserting fingers or sex toys into the anus and licking the anus (aka rimming).

People can explore and engage in anal play regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.

Anal play can be a very enjoyable experience for some people but it can also be a little bit risky. This guide will provide you with information to help you to explore it safely.



Talk and then talk again!

Sex should be fun and enjoyable for all parties. If you know what you enjoy and you can communicate this with your partner(s) and in turn, they can communicate this with you. Having these discussions before sex is not only an important part of the discussion when it comes to consent but helps you have a healthy sex life and most importantly you will then have the sex you enjoy.



Things to think about when it comes to sex:

- Do you or don't like penetration?
- Do you like to explore if you're into sex toys
- What types of sex do you both enjoy? Oral sex or you want to try mutual masturbation etc

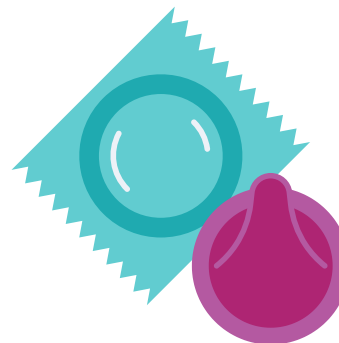
Understand Consent!

Communication is the key to healthy sex life, as it lets your partner(s) know that you are enjoying it and that you consent. Sexual consent should always be an enthusiastic yes!



Both you and your partner(s) can say no or stop sex at any time, even after sex has started.

It is also possible to consent to certain types of sex but not others, for example wanting to have oral sex but not anal. If your partner(s) says no at any point, you should respect their boundaries.



If you and your partner(s) agreed to use condoms and then it is removed without their or your knowledge. This is not consensual sex!

Masturbation is normal!

Before we go any further, we just want to remind you that masturbation is perfectly normal. It's actually a good way to explore and get to know your body and will help you communicate your sexual likes and dislikes to a partner.

Masturbation can be done solo (on your own) or mutual masturbation (with someone else). Some people get pleasure from touching their anus, just like other people get pleasure from touching their penis, testicles, clitoris, and vulva.

Whilst some people use their hands and fingers, some prefer to rub or insert objects such as sex toys.

Remember

Personal hygiene is very important; you need to wash your hands before and after masturbation. It may also help to wear gloves.



It's still normal!



If you're using sex toys with your partner(s), condoms can help you reduce the risk of passing on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Make sure you use a new condom for each partner and if you are inserting the toy into different orifices, you will need to use a new condom for that too. If you're using sex toys for anal masturbation, it's important that you wash the toys in between use.

Masturbating can lead to an orgasm, but you don't have to orgasm; not everyone can or wants to. Masturbation is different for everyone and what feels nice one time may not be on other occasions, it's all about you learning what is right for you. There's no right or wrong way to masturbate.



Don't forget the lube!

You may find using a water-based lubricant may help reduce friction and injury.

Is anal sex safe?

Like any sexual activity, anal sex comes with some health risks. The most common ones are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) such as, Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Syphilis, LGV and HIV. Anal sex may also cause bleeding.

You can take precautions to reduce these risks and ensure you can enjoy anal sex safely.



Anal sex is the riskiest type of sex for transmitting HIV for both heterosexual couples and men who have sex with men (MSM).

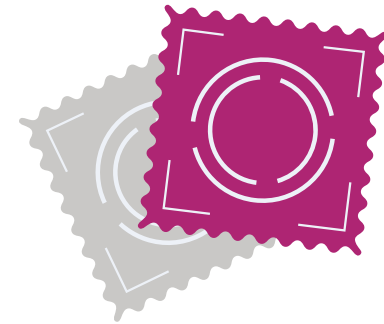
This is partly because the tissue of the rectum is fragile and doesn't self-lubricate; by taking part in anal play, you can introduce tiny tears in it (which can happen even if you're gentle and take it slow during anal play) this can give viruses direct access into your bloodstream. The lining of the anus and rectum is also porous, this means viruses can easily pass through it. To reduce this risk, it's essential to wear condoms during anal sex or for both monogamous partners to first test for all STIs.

Bleeding

Having Anal sex may cause small tears in the rectum (called anal fissures) which may cause bleeding. A tiny bit of bleeding after anal sex may be expected, especially if it's your first time receiving anal sex. Still, if you aren't sufficiently relaxed or lubricated, there's a risk of larger fissures and more significant bleeding.



Any bleeding from the rectum should be checked out by a Healthcare professional.



Other risks of anal sex

Finally, going back and forth between vaginal, anal, and oral sex can spread bacteria and lead to Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) or gastrointestinal problems. To help prevent this, you should put on a new condom or wash your sex toy or penis, after having anal sex.

Don't be a douche!

In your quest to keep everything clean, you might be tempted to douche prior to anal sex thinking it will make things cleaner.

Douching too much or using anything other than water can damage the area, irritate cells in the rectum, and cause dryness in the rectal area which can cause fissures and lead to the spread of sexually transmitted infections.



To douche or not?

Deciding to douche is your choice and preference. However, it is important to know it is not necessary. Your rectum is designed to keep poo up high until it's time to have a bowel movement.

A wash in the bath or shower should take care of any remanence before you take part in anal play.

Be prepared!

You may need to be prepared that there might be some poo!

If you and your partner (s) have gone to the toilet recently and neither of you have any stomach issues that causes diarrhoea you probably don't need to worry about a sudden poop explosion.

If a little poo makes an appearance, don't be make a big issue about it. Your partner might be embarrassed, so let them know it's no big deal. Try to deal with it in a kind and compassionate way.



It's best to be prepared, so have paper towels nearby that you can use and remember after anal play or if there has been an incident wash your hands.

What to do after anal sex

Take a trip to the bathroom. Once you've finished, the person receiving the anal sex may need to go anyway, but it is also important to wash your hands.



Talk about it

If it's your first time trying anal sex, you should talk about it with your partner. It's important that you both, not just the receiver, let each other know how it was.

- Were you into it?
- Was it uncomfortable?
- Is it a definite no-go, or do you think another position might work better?

Of course, don't be afraid to say that it wasn't for you. You shouldn't be pressured into doing something you don't like. Any partner who cares will understand that.

Checking everything is ok!

It's perfectly normal to feel a little 'strange' in the bottom area especially if it's your first time but it should feel normal again pretty soon.

If you're left with any lasting discomfort, pain or bleeding after anal sex, you should call your GP or make a call to the sexual health clinic.

We know it may be embarrassing, but you really can't ignore this sort of thing. Your health is far more important than a few seconds of being red faced, and we guarantee that they've heard it all before.



Condoms

Using a condom is the most effective way to stop you and your partners(s) from transmitting STIs. Remember a few things may reduce the effectiveness of condoms

The penis touches the anus before a condom is put on
Small amounts of semen can be excreted before ejaculation

The condom splits or slips off
This can happen if the wrong size is used or not put on correctly

The condom is damaged
This could be by using oil based lubricants, sharp fingernails or teeth

Using too much or too little lubricant
Using the right amount of lube could reduce the risk of friction

What if the condom breaks?

Condoms must be used correctly to make them effective. If not used correctly, condoms can rip, fall off or even burst during sex. If a condom breaks: and you feel there may a risk of pregnancy you will need to access Emergency contraception, You can visit a pharmacy or call the clinic . You have up to 120 hours to access Emergency contraception.



If you feel there are concerns about HIV, call the clinic as soon as possible or A&E if we are closed. Medication (PEP) can be offered up to 3 days after sex to help prevent the transmission of HIV.



Safer sex can be sexy!

Free condoms are available at the sexual health clinic in St. Helens. You can also have condoms delivered directly to your door in the post. The choice is yours! Just scan the code below to visit our website.

Gloves are also available upon request. visit our website for more information



It's important to make sure your condom fits; if it's too small it can break, if it's too large it may come off during sex. If you need a different size, please speak to a member of our staff.

If you or your partner has an allergy to latex, we offer **Latex-free condoms**



Are you PrEP-erd?

Another way to reduce your risk of HIV is to consider Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). If you're HIV-negative, you may be able to take PrEP medicine to reduce your risk of getting the virus.

PrEP is available for some people who are at high risk of HIV infection – for example, those whose partner is HIV positive.

How do I get PrEP?

If you think you need PrEP, you need to contact the clinic. A nurse will assess your suitability for PrEP and if they think you would benefit from it, you will be given an appointment with a Doctor. Once you are on PrEP, you will attend the clinic regularly for blood tests to ensure you remain healthy while taking PrEP.

How often do you need to take PrEP?

Taking PrEP can be different for everyone. There are two types of methods, "event-based" and "daily dosing". How often you take it will depend on which works best for you and may depend on how often and the type of sex you have. Your healthcare provider will help you decide which is best for you.

You can stop taking PrEP if you stop having sex and you're risk of getting HIV has gone away.

Let's talk about PEP!

PEP stands for Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (sometimes called PEPSE). It is a medication that a person takes after sex to help reduce the risk of HIV taking hold of a person. It's meant as an emergency measure and only to be used as a last resort, such as if a condom fails during sex.



You must access PEP within 72 hours of exposure. If you have put yourself at risk of HIV call clinic. If it is out of hours visit A&E

Vaccines

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination is available for all men who have sex with men (including Trans people who have sex with men) up to and including 45 years of age. This will help protect against genital warts and both anal and throat cancer.

In addition, men who have sex with men, and sex workers can get vaccinated to prevent Hepatitis A and B.



Staying sexually healthy

Testing for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is an important way to stay sexually healthy. You should get a test if:

- You think you might have symptoms of an STI
- You had sex without using a condom, including vaginal, oral and anal sex
- The condom split or came off during sex
- You are at the beginning of a new sexual relationship
- You or your partner have more than one sexual partner
- You shared injecting equipment

How often you need a check-up depends on your lifestyle and your sexual activity.

We recommend that all gay, bisexual, Transwomen having sex with men, and other men who are having sex with men have a full check-up for STIs every 3 months and at least every year if you are having sex with the same person, even if you don't believe you have put yourself at risk.



I need a test?

We operate a telephone triage service at St Helen's clinic. To book an appointment, call 01744 646 473. You will be given a telephone assessment and if you need to attend the clinic, the nurse will arrange a suitable time for you to visit.

You can also request an online testing kit by visiting getiton.org.uk

What will you test for?

Everyone who visits our clinic is offered the following tests :

A blood test to check for HIV, Hepatitis B, C and Syphilis. A sample of blood is taken from your arm, this is the most convenient and accurate way of testing for these infections. However, we understand that sometimes people are afraid of needles, whilst we will try our best to help you overcome this fear, we can offer alternatives such as a finger prick test.



A urine sample or self-collected swab to test for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea. If you had vaginal sex or oral sex, you will also be offered a swab for these areas too.

Results

If you have given us permission to text you, you will receive all your negative results by text message. If you test positive for an infection or we need you to repeat a test due to an error in processing, we will give you a call.



On average, it can take up to two weeks to receive your results, however, on occasion it may take longer. You do not need to call us if you are still within the two week period for result processing.

It is important that you inform the team of any change of address or contact details after you have taken a test.

Accessing and Tracking Your Test Results online following online testing.

If you have completed online testing, you will receive your results online, and will be notified via the method you chosen when registering. Each time you start an online consultation we ask you to confirm your details as it is important you keep these up to date.

What happens if I test positive for an STI?

- Your nurse or doctor will give you advice about the particular treatment and STI you have tested positive for and they will explain what you should and shouldn't do following the treatment.
- Make sure whomever you have had sexual contact with is checked out and cleared of infection before having sex with you or anyone else.
- Avoid sex until the STI has been successfully treated. It is recommended to be re-tested 6 weeks after treatment to ensure the medication has worked.
- Always use a condom every time you have sex.

IMPORTANT

If you are given antibiotics, it is important to complete the course as directed, even if you start to feel better.

Telling your sexual partners?

The process of informing a sexual partner is known as Partner Notification. You may choose to tell your partners yourself, or you may ask us to help you. We can notify your sexual partners on your behalf about the risk of infection. This is called 'Provider Referral' and is done confidentially so we will not mention your name, location, or when the sex took place.

Provider Referrals are useful if there was a difficult break up for example. Notifying partners about an infection can feel daunting, but it also shows care and respect for the other person. In the majority of cases, sexual partners are grateful to have been informed, it will prompt them to have a check-up, and get treatment if it is indicated.



Useful contact & Info



St Helens Sexual Health Service
01744 646 473



getiton.org.uk



NHS 111



For access to PEP when we are closed
visit A&E



Chemsex support

<https://www.changegrowlive.org/chemsex-support-professionals>